

NEITI Lauded for Looking Beyond Oil

Stakeholders gathered for the Northeast Road-show have commended NEITI for looking beyond the oil and gas sector and extending its searchlight into mining. They however called on NEITI to intensify its focus on the mining sector for increased revenue transparency, environmental protection and sustainable human development in the zone and the country at large.

A two-day sensitization event, the Northeast Road-show was held at Zaranda Hotel in Bauchi, Bauchi State from 29 to 30 August 2007. It attracted about 200 stakeholders drawn from across the six states of the zone and from all strata of society, including civil society, academia, media, women, faith-based and youth groups, executive and legislative arms of government from state and federal levels, extractive industry and traditional institutions. It was declared open by Mallam Isa Yuguda, the Executive Governor of Bauchi State.

In his welcome address, Dr. Siyan Malomo, the chairman of NEITI, said the Northeast Road-show offered the opportunity to highlight the relevance of NEITI to all sections of the country. “The Northeast brims with mineral resources,” he said. “Our goal is to ensure that all revenues from all extractive sector aid development and that the mistakes already made in the management of oil and gas revenues will not be repeated.”

He added that with proper management, the mining sector could generate as much revenue as, and much more jobs than, the petroleum sector. “With its vast mineral endowments, the Northeast will thus be a major player in the coming transformation of Nigeria,” he stated, adding that NEITI is dedicated to ensuring that Nigeria’s abundant resources translate to shared prosperity for all Nigerians.

Governor Yuguda, in his keynote address, urged all stakeholders to support NEITI to ensure that its pole position as a leading EITI-compliant country is upheld. “This is not simply because of its feel-good effect,” said the governor, who was represented by Alhaji Sanusi Maijamaa, the President of the National Association of Small Scale Industrialists (NASSI). “But primarily because revenue transparency is central to the social and economic transformation of our country. Transparency actually holds the key to the transformation of our country from a potentially rich country to a really prosperous one.”

The theme of the road-show was: “operationalisation and implementation of the NEITI Act for civil society, community groups and wider stakeholders.” The road-show was the first public outreach activity by NEITI after the passage and signing of the NEITI Act on May 28, 2007. Apart from the opening ceremony, the road-show featured five sessions, covering areas such as operationalisation of the NEITI Act, links between NEITI and solid minerals development, environment sustainability and poverty reduction, and the role of civil society in implementation of the NEITI Act.

Speakers and panelists at the road-show include the Chairman of EFCC, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu (who was represented by Mr. A. Okauru), Hon. Yakubu Umaru Barde of the House of Representatives, Professor Ibrahim Garba of the ministry of solid minerals, Mr. Aliyu Monsur of Chevron, Mr. Clement Nwankwo of NDI, Ms. Nkoyo Toyo of GADA, Mr. Daniel Yerima of Publish What You Pay (PWYP) and Dr. Saidu Baba of University of Maidguiri. Also in attendance were two traditional rulers, Alhaji Abubukar Umar Suleiman, the Emir of Bade in Yobe State and Alhaji Yunusa Mohammed Danyaya, the Emir of Ningi in Bauchi State.

In the communiqué, the participants called for full implementation of NEITI Act, amendment of some sections of the Act, and translation of the Act into major Nigerian languages. They commended NEITI for extending transparency into the mining sector and urged for further reform in the sector and the enforcement of mining rules. They also called on NEITI to continue to partner with other law enforcement agencies, the legislature and civil society groups.

The road-show ended with a press conference, which was addressed by Dr. Malomo, Professor Assisi Asobie, Chairperson of the NEITI Civil Society Steering Committee, Ms. Mnena Shija, a member of the CS Steering Committee and a commissioner in Benue State and Mr. Daniel Yerima of PWYP.

The Northeast road-show was the last of the regional sensitization forums in Nigeria’s six geo-political zones. The zonal activities will be followed by state and community-based town-hall meetings, designed to increase awareness, deepen understanding and increase the buy-in of stakeholders across board.